

NSC BRIEFING

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7 March 1956

DIA and DOS review(s)
completed.

FRENCH NORTH AFRICA

- I. In week since Council last briefed on Algerian crisis, few actual developments on scene. Focus instead on France itself.
- A. Nothing but silence from Algerian nationalists in response to Premier Mollet's 28 Feb "lay down your arms or else" ultimatum.
- B. Somewhat improved French military successes against rebels.
1. Some 160 rebels killed, "several hundred" captured since last Thursday, while French army lost 13 killed, 7 wounded.
- C. Nonetheless, French continue extremely apprehensive: Mollet says he expects greatly increased violence in Algeria by late March or early April.
- D. Gen. Valluy (French rep. NATO Standing Group) says "anarchy can occur in Algeria in matter of weeks or even days".
- II. Mollet's proposed policy of strength in Algeria not yet settled issue in France.
- A. Assembly debate on his request for special powers now scheduled for 8-9 March, and Government's supporters already split.
- B. Many Socialists shocked by Mollet's ultimatum to rebels: Popular Republicans' spokesman has said his party cannot condone such policy.
- C. Embassy Paris reports widespread feeling in France that Algerian problem is most serious one faced by Assembly since World War II.

- D. Some even fear that Fourth Republic itself cannot survive shock of either loss of Algeria or slaughter of French settlers there.

III. Question of how French can implement Mollet Government's decision of firmness, if approved, still up in air.

- A. Gen. Valluy estimates total of 500,000 men needed to pacify Algeria (now nearly 200,000 there).
 - 1. However, Valluy says time probably not available to give such large forces the special guerrilla training necessary.
- B. Army Attache Paris reports that usually reliable source believes "full mobilization" is imminent.
 - 1. This presumably refers to "ready reserve" (some 300,000 available) which is subject to immediate recall without parliamentary consent.
- C. Yet Gen. Gruenther reports that French troop shifts to North Africa since last summer and planned shifts this month already reduce NATO strength by the equivalent of three M-Day divisions, and severely undermine the French Army's wartime mobilization base.

IV. US interests involved in other respects, as well.

- A. Strong-arm approach in Algeria would also have side-effects in Morocco (where US has air-base interests).
- B. Regardless of French stand that Algeria is indivisible part of metropolitan France, policy of force there will raise charges of bloody colonialism throughout Arab world, provide Soviet Bloc with further ammunition for its influence drive.

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C. French-US relations also being damaged.

1. French charging US with encouragement of nationalists.
2. Pressing us to back their "policy", on grounds that USSR is "outflanking" NATO through support for Arabs, who, in turn, are supporting North African nationalists.
3. French officials nonetheless unable to spell out "policy" they want US to back: both Mollet and Pineau have asked only for joint statement backing "French presence" in area.

V. Elsewhere in French North Africa, some net improvement visible.

A. Although 2 March declaration by French and Moroccan governments merely suspends--rather than abrogates--"protectorate" treaty (Fez 1912), France has conceded Moroccan participation in foreign affairs, defense and internal security.

1. Immediate celebrations held in principal Moroccan cities to acclaim "independence."
2. Sultan--who returned to Rabat on 5 March--expected by Paris to issue strong call for tribal cease-fire.

B. New French negotiations with Tunisians opened in Paris 29 Feb.

1. Tunisians want national army, diplomatic representation.
2. General elections on 25 March--first ever held in Tunisia--will select constituent assembly (to convene 8 April, draft Tunisian constitution).
3. Considerable agitation and pre-election maneuvering probable, but large-scale disturbances unlikely.

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